

# Rehabilitating Realism Through Mohammed Ayooob's "Subaltern Realism" Theory

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ROB GRAY, DEC 23 2020

In recent decades, especially since the end of the Cold War, Neorealism has received criticism from numerous sources within the field of International Relations (IR) theory (Krause & Williams, 1996, p. 229). These criticisms have collectively shown that Neorealism is unsuitable for explaining the behaviour of states in the international system and the causes of interstate conflict, therefore damaging the legitimacy of Realism as a whole. This paper recognises Realism's current lack of legitimacy but contends that Mohammed Ayooob's Subaltern Realism, a post-colonial, post-positivist, neo-classical perspective / theory, possesses rehabilitative potential for Realism as a mainstream IR paradigm. This is because it is able to explain the behaviour of a majority of states within the international system and the causes of a majority of interstate conflicts, an assertion which this paper will aim to prove.

In order to achieve this this paper will adhere to the following structure: firstly, the criteria through which a theory can be judged as successful will be set out, before critiquing Neorealism in order to show why it fails to satisfy these criteria. This critique will take a postcolonial approach, centring around the problem of western centrism in IR and the effects this has on Neorealism. Following this Ayooob's Subaltern Realism will then be outlined. Here its main principles will be explained, showing how it differs from Neorealism and how it atones for its failings, whilst also making clear the foundational role that classical realist thought plays in Ayooob's formulation of the theory (Ayooob, 1998, pp. 39-41). Finally, both Neorealism and Subaltern Realism will be applied to a case study of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict with the aim of showing why the prior is impractical and unhelpful, and why the latter succeeds, proving that it can rehabilitate Realism within IR theory.

### **How Can we Judge an IR theory to be Successful or Unsuccessful?**

To make discussions on the failures of Neorealism and the strengths of Subaltern Realism possible it is first important to understand what makes an IR theory 'successful' or 'unsuccessful'. Here it must be noted that there is, as Robert Cox stated, "no theory of universal validity" in the field of IR (Seethi, 2018). Stephen Walt expands upon this, explaining that "no single approach can capture the complexity of contemporary world politics" (Walt, 1998, p. 30). In other words, no theory or perspective can explain all the actions of all states at all times in the international system due to its vast size and complexity.

In light of this, IR theories must therefore aim to offer 'majority validity' instead. Ayooob, in support of this, argues that in order for a theory or perspective to be credible it must explain the two most important issues in the field: why a majority of states behave the way they do in the international system, and the causes of a majority of the interstate conflicts occurring within it (Ayooob, 2002, pp. 28, 33). If successful in doing so a theory will provide "substantive theory on its (IR's) most important issue of all: war and peace.", and as a result of this will be useful to policymakers in preventing and ameliorating conflict (Mann, 1996, p. 221).

Therefore, in order for an IR theory to be successful and of practical use to policymakers it must adequately explain the behaviour of a majority of states in the international systems and the reasons why a majority of interstate conflicts occur. This paper will argue that Neorealism is unsuccessful because it fails to satisfy these criteria, whilst Subaltern

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Realism succeeds because it does.

## Why Neorealism Fails

Having now set out the criteria that an IR theory must fulfil in order to be deemed credible and practically useful, this paper will now argue that Neorealism fails to satisfy them. To do this Neorealism will be outlined then critiqued with the aim of showing that the theory, due to it being western centric and positivist, is unable to explain the actions of a majority of states in the international system and a majority of the conflicts that occur between them.

Neorealism was notably formulated by Kenneth Waltz and John Mearsheimer in the aftermath of the Second World War. Representing a divergence from Classical Realist thought, the theory argues that state behaviour is motivated by the desire to increase their power as a means to achieve security in the anarchical international system, whereas prior Realist doctrine viewed states as power-maximisers (Dunne & Schmidt, 2017, p. 108). Waltz articulated this, stating that "the ultimate concern of states is not for power but for security" (Waltz, 1989, p. 40). Taking an empirical, positivist approach, the theory, also known as Structural Realism, is interested in the "distribution of capabilities" amongst actors as this affects the structure of the system (Lobell, 2010, p. 1). This leads Neorealism to make its key argument – that the international system is at its most stable when its structure is bipolar in nature, as it was during the Cold War, due to there being a balance of power between the two actors. A multipolar system like the one that existed before WW2, according to Neorealism, is less stable and prone to conflict as states tend to form alliances with other states to gain security advantages over rivals (Waltz, 1964, pp. 882-885). Neorealism can therefore be seen to be a positivist, nomothetic theory, meaning that it aims to identify universal scientific laws that govern state behaviour, with this rigid approach causing problems that will be further elaborated upon in a later part of this critique (Narizny, 2017, p. 160). This positivist approach leads it to view all states as power-maximisers, with it favouring a bipolar international system over multipolar one due to it viewing the prior as more stable.

With Neorealism having been overviewed, a critique can now be performed. Having previously mentioned that the key overarching criticism of this critique is that the theory is too western-centric, it is important to note that this problem applies to mainstream IR theory as a whole, with "mainstream IR theory" referring broadly to Realism and Liberalism and their various iterations. Stanley Hoffman, by stating that the field is "An American social science...to study American foreign policy was to study the international system", shows the dominance of the West in the study of IR, and reveals an inability to look beyond the West when formulating theory (Hoffman, 1977, pp. 41-42). Ayoob also identifies this problem. He describes a "monopoly over theoretical knowledge" existing in IR theory favouring states in the West (Ayoob, 2002, p. 29). This means that theories are formulated through the use of data recorded from a minority of states in the international system, with these states being well developed with (mostly) well-ordered domestic situations (Ayoob, 1998, p. 39). Obtaining evidence from a "restricted universe" is a key factor in rendering the mainstream IR paradigms unable to explain the behaviour of a majority of states in the international system because these states tend to be very different from those which these theories are based upon (Ayoob, 1998, p. 42). This analysis of the intellectual foundations of IR establishes the problem of western centrism that the mainstream paradigms suffer from, which renders them unable to fulfil the criteria set out in Section 1 and unsuccessful as a result. However, as the aim of this paper is not to critique the mainstream IR paradigms the next task will be to show how this problem specifically manifests itself in the case of Neorealism.

The problem of western centrism affects Neorealism in a number of ways. Firstly, it causes the theory to overlook the vast majority of interstate conflicts occurring in the international system due to them taking place in the Third World, outside of its intellectual perimeters. The research of Kalevi Holsti illustrates this, with him calculating that 159 of the 164 conflicts occurring between 1945 and 1995 took place in the Third World (Holsti, 1996, p.22, cited in: Ayoob, 1998, pp.38-39). Conflict between the Great Powers has, by contrast, decreased dramatically since the Second World War, with 0 direct conflicts occurring in the same period (Roser, 2016). Neorealism, due to its narrow western-centric focus, ignores these Third World conflicts and the factors that cause them, leading it to erroneously assert that the bipolar system in the Cold War was stable because there was no direct conflict between the Great Powers. This incorrect assertion begins to show why Neorealism fails to satisfy the criteria for a successful IR theory as it overlooks the vast majority of interstate conflicts and the lack of stability in the Third World, rendering it unable to explain a majority of these conflicts or the behaviour of a majority of states in the international system.

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Another negative effect that the problem of western centrism has on Neorealism is that it causes the theory to promote a definition of security that only applies to the Great Power states, meaning that it cannot explain "the multifaceted and multidimensional nature of the problem of security as faced by the majority of actors in the international system" (Ayooob, 1997, p. 121). As a result of this Neorealism presumes that states do not have to contend with internal threats and that they are coherent socio-political units, with threats to their survival originating from other states due to the anarchic nature of the international system (Clempton, 2011). However, in reality a majority of states in the international system are more preoccupied with internal threats than external ones (Ayooob, 1998, p. 33). Data from the UCDP shows this, revealing that between 1946-2018 the vast majority of armed conflicts occurring globally have been intrastate in nature. Indeed in 2018 30 out of 37 armed conflicts were internal, with just one being interstate (Pettersson, et al., 2019).

Furthermore, interstate conflicts occurring in this period often began internally before being internationalised due to other states providing aid to one side of an internal conflict, further showing the significance of internal security in motivating state behaviour (Themnér & Wallensteen, 2011, p. 528). Neorealism's assertion that external security is the key motivating factor behind state behaviour in the international system is therefore false, as its western-centric focus causes it to overlook the fact that a majority of states in the international system are not coherent socio-political units, and that they are more concerned with internal threats than external ones. The theory is therefore unable to explain the behaviour of a majority of states in the international system as it doesn't recognise the significance of domestic variables in influencing behaviour, rendering it unable to fulfil the criteria set out in Section 1.

Through examining the nature of Third World states further light can be shed on how the problem of western centrism affects Neorealism. Third World states tend to be at a very early stage of state-building, similar to "Florence in the 15th century and England in the 17th century" (Ayooob, 1998, p. 41). Regimes are therefore less able to achieve and maintain sovereignty, explaining why these states cannot be treated in the same way as the legitimate, developed Western states when theorising in IR. Developing states are often at a very early stage of state-building due to the large increase in the size of the international system due to decolonisation following the Second World War, with this making them vulnerable to internal disorder and negative external influence (Ayooob, 1998, p. 32). Neorealism, due to its western-centric focus, ignores decolonisation and the resulting early stages of state-building prevalent in the Third World when identifying the causes of conflict. Mearsheimer's view that all states must be concerned with power relative to other states in order to maintain their position in the global hierarchy exemplifies this, as he presumes that all states are domestically well-ordered enough to actively pursue greater international influence (Mearsheimer, 1995, p. 34). As the Third World makes up the majority of states in the international system this therefore further shows how the theory is unable to satisfy the criteria for successful IR theorising.

At this stage of the critique considerable attention has been devoted to how the problem of western centrism negatively affects Neorealism. This could logically lead one to question why the theory cannot simply adapt to account for the collapse of the bipolar system and decolonisation. By exploring the answer to this question, the weaknesses of Neorealism's positivist approach are revealed. Neorealism can be regarded as positivist due to it being empirically formulated at a time when the IR discipline was "seeking to produce a scientific research program as objective and universal as possible" (Pellerin, 2012, p.60). However, Robert Cox states that "all theories have a perspective. Perspectives derive from a position in time and space." (Cox, 1996, p.87). Neorealism's quest for objectivity is therefore ultimately unsuccessful due to it being a product of the time it was created in, the Cold War, and being based on data obtained from a "restricted universe", with this scientific approach making it ignorant of its historical context (Ayooob, 1998, p. 42, Alawi, 2014, p. 60). The approach therefore also renders it unable to adapt to account for the expansion of the international system, meaning that it is unable to recognise a majority of states and cannot explain their behaviour or the causes of conflict amongst them (Ayooob, 2002, pp.30-31).

This approach can be critiqued further by comparing it to the classical approach of the English School. The English School rejected positivism, meaning that it does not apply methods from the natural sciences to the social sciences, allowing it to adapt to incorporate the enlargement of the international system into its perspective (Wight, 1966). Here Ayooob notes Hedley Bull, who described theorising in IR as a "scientifically imperfect process of perception characterized above all by the explicit reliance upon the exercise of judgement" (Bull, 1969, p.20, cited in: Ayooob, 2002, p.31). This approach is therefore conscious of its historical context and the limitations this causes, and through

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this "exercise of judgement" is able to adapt (Bull, 1969, p.20, cited in: Ayooob, 2002, p.31). Bull differs from Waltz, arguing that there is an expanding international society composed of shared common norms, values and institutions, as opposed to an international system which is created by "contact between states and the impact of one state on another" (Hoffman, 1986, p. 185). For Bull, change takes place in the international society as a result of the evolution of culture in societies creating different, or shared, conceptions of the goals behind state coexistence and cooperation, a view which can be applied to all states. Waltz, on the other hand, saw change in the structure of the international system as being the result of changes in the distribution of state power causing the system to transition from being multipolar to bipolar (or vice versa), an analysis which only potentially applies to developed states (Hoffman, 1986, p. 185). The English School approach reveals the drawbacks of Neorealism's rigid scientific approach, which renders it unable to adapt to include the majority of the international system in its analysis, showing why the theory does not fulfil the criteria for successful theorising in IR. Furthermore, the adaptive potential of the classical approach can be seen here, which is utilised by Subaltern Realism.

This critique has argued that, as a result of the problem of Western Centrism and its positivist approach, Neorealism is unable explain the actions of a majority of states in the international system and the causes of a majority of interstate conflicts. This problem limits the theory as it causes it to presume that the issues facing states in the developed world are the same throughout all states due to it surmising that all states have well-ordered domestic situations, when in reality the antithesis is prevalent. Neorealism therefore has an outdated view of security and the motivating factors behind state behaviour in the international system, with its positivist approach rendering it unable to expand its intellectual parameters beyond a minority of developed states. The theory does not meet the criteria for successful theorising in IR theory, thus showing why Realism requires rehabilitation within IR theory.

## What is Subaltern Realism and Why is it Successful?

Having shown how Neorealism fails as an IR theory, this section will outline Subaltern Realism, showing why it succeeds as an IR theory. To achieve this an examination of Ayooob's literature will first be performed. Here it can be seen that the term "Subaltern" is used due to it referring to the less powerful section of a society that tend to constitute the majority of its population (Ayooob, 1998, p.45). When doing this it is immediately important to note that Ayooob, like Bull, utilises the aforementioned classical approach, referencing the foundational work of Niccolo Machiavelli and Thomas Hobbes (Ayooob, 1998, pp. 39-41). Of key importance here is the time period in which they were writing, when states in Europe were not coherent socio-political units and leaders had to attempt to find the right balance between power and legitimacy. Ayooob points out that most states in the present-day international system are "at the same stage of historical development as Florence in the 15th century and England in the 17th century", whilst also agreeing with the realist notion of the system being anarchical and state-centric (Ayooob, 1998, p. 41-43).

Subaltern Realism therefore does not view all states as being highly developed, functioning units in the way that Neorealism does, and is much better suited for explaining the actions of a majority of states in the international system as a result. This is because it recognises that the key task facing these actors is state building, not the acquisition of power in relation to other rival states, with state-building being a domestic task with an external aspect, as favourable regional balances of power benefit the state making enterprise (Ayooob, 1998, p. 43).

Having recognised this, Subaltern Realism then goes on to make four key assertions about theorising in relation to Third World states. The first of these is that "issues of domestic order and international order are inextricably intertwined, especially in the arena of conflict and conflict resolution" (Ayooob, 1998, pp. 44). Here, as a result of their early stage of state-building, developing states are vulnerable to the policies of the Great Powers and their institutions. The Structural Adjustment Policies of the Great Powers show this, forcing Third World states to attempt to achieve Western levels of development in mere decades, whilst the funding of proxy wars continues to be a key cause of both internal and external conflict in the Third World (Ayooob, 1998, p.45, Themner & Wallenstein, 2011, p. 528). This shows the influence of international order on Third World states. Ayooob then asserts that domestic level variables must receive analytical priority when explaining a majority of conflicts in the international system due to them being the primary cause of such conflicts, but that external variables must also be taken into account due to the destabilising effect that they have on domestic order (Ayooob, 1998, p. 45). The 2011 Libyan revolution can be cited as an example of how domestic disorder is a key cause of interstate conflict, as growing unrest in the state led the

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UK, USA, and France to become militarily involved in the conflict in an effort to remove Colonel Muammar Gaddafi from power (BBC, 2011, Yonamine, 2011, pp.1-2). Steven David also gives primacy to internal disorder due to them causing humanitarian disasters and hindering access to natural resources, both of which can be causes of external intervention, supporting Ayoob's assertion (Steven, 1998, p. 77).

Finally, Ayoob states that the link between domestic and external variables explains the link between intrastate and interstate conflict (Ayoob, 1998, p.45). For example, states may attempt to provide aid to diaspora in another state's internal conflict, with whom they have been separated from due to colonially drawn borders, causing it to become interstate as a result. The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is an example of this, as will be shown later in this paper (Council on Foreign Relations, 2020).

These assumptions show the stark contrast between the approaches taken by Subaltern Realism and Neorealism, with the prior's emphasis on the significance of domestic level variables in causing interstate conflict showing a far greater understanding of the nature of a majority of states in the international system and the causes of conflict between them than the latter's focus on power distribution and external security.

Leading on from this, Ayoob then outlines five variables that should be studied when predicting, explaining, and preventing conflict. The first variable is the level of state-building of the states involved. The less developed they are the more likely internal conflict and disorder becomes (Ayoob, 1998, p.45). Second is the ethnic composition of a state, as the less coherent and singular the population's conception of nationalism is, especially when compared to that of the state leadership, the greater the chance of internal conflict (Ayoob, 1998, p.46). Next is contested territory, as if this exists between states or groups then internal and external conflict is more likely to occur (Ayoob, 1998, p.46). Great Power involvement is also a variable, as rivalry between these states can cause domestic conflict in Third World states. In economic terms this exacerbates the problem of the international division of labour with these developing states being economically dependent upon the Global North which in turn affects their behaviour in both domestic and international systems (Ayoob, 1998, p.46). Finally, Ayoob also notes international norms as a variable, as if they permit the breakup of a state then this is more likely to occur, as was the case with the USSR in 1991 (Ayoob, 1998, p.46).

These variables enable the IR theorist to predict and explain internal disorder, with this being a leading cause of interstate conflict in the international system. This further shows how Subaltern Realism has a superior understanding of the factors affecting the behaviour of Third World states in the international system when compared to Neorealism, which overlooks them due its narrow focus on the Global North.

Despite these strengths Ayoob's theory is not devoid of criticism, as his view of security shows. He states that "security... is defined in relation to vulnerabilities both internal and external, that threaten to, or have the potential to, bring down or significantly weaken state structures... the more a state and/or regime... fall(s) toward the invulnerable end of the vulnerable-invulnerable continuum the more secure it/ they will be." (Ayoob, 1997, p. 130). Critics argue that this is in fact a Western-centric view of security that presumes that state security is always legitimate in nature and that it always attempts to improve the security situation of the entire population, not just a ruling elite. Turki Mahmoud Alawi, for example, argues that Ayoob rejects "the view that the state may actually be imposing an illegitimate form of security on the population" (Alawi, 2014, p. 61). This, however, is short sighted as Ayoob recognises that states with authoritarian regimes that use security to subjugate their populations usually fall into the vulnerable area of the "vulnerable-invulnerable continuum" (Ayoob, 1997, pp.130-131). Subaltern Realism is therefore aware of the damaging effect that repressive state security has on both the domestic order within a state and on the legitimacy of the regime itself. However, the theory could be improved here if the delegitimising effect this has internationally was to be outlined, as this can often cause external intervention. Ayoob's definition of security is therefore imperfect yet sound on the whole, with the flexible classical basis of the theory allowing for this definition to easily be expanded upon to include an international dimension.

In summary, Subaltern Realism is a post-colonial Realist IR perspective / theory that incorporates the developing Third World states, a majority of the states in the international system, into its analysis of state behaviour and interstate conflict. It takes a different view of the challenges facing states and the factors motivating their behaviour

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than that of Neorealism, convincingly arguing that the desire for domestic order is a more powerful motivating factor behind state behaviour in the international system than the need for power over other states due to a majority of states being at an early stage of state building. Furthermore, by identifying internal disorder as a primary cause of interstate conflict Subaltern Realism promotes a more modern conception of security when compared to Neorealism, which views security as an external issue. Finally, by utilising the classical realist, post-positivist approach, Subaltern Realism is not bound by the rigid empiricism that Neorealism suffers from, and is instead conscious of the historical time period in which it was formulated and able to adapt as a result. Subaltern Realism therefore fulfils the criteria for successful IR theorising as it is able to explain the behaviour of a majority of states in the international system and the causes of a majority of interstate conflicts, and is suitable for use in policymaking as a result.

## Neorealism and Subaltern Realism Applied to the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict

With a critique of Neorealism and Subaltern Realism having shown that the latter is more credible as an IR theory due to it fulfilling the criteria for successful IR theorising set out in Section 1, this conclusion will now be tested by applying it to a case study of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. This conflict has been chosen because it is an ethnic conflict that shows how domestic disorder can cause interstate conflict (Yamakov, 1991, pp. 636-637). In order to perform this case study the history of the conflict will be briefly outlined before Neorealism is applied to show how the theory overlooks the key causes of conflict and cannot provide a convincing explanation of the conflict, making it unsuitable for use in achieving conflict amelioration. Following this, the same will be done with Subaltern Realism in order to support the conclusions of Sections 2 and 3.

Nagorno-Karabakh is an Armenian ethnic majority region in Azerbaijan over which direct conflict with Armenia has occurred since 1988 following the two state's independence from the Soviet Union, following a previous conflict between the two states over the region in 1920 following their independence from the Ottoman Empire (Harutyunyan, 2017, p. 69). Due to a ceasefire being agreed following an ethnic Armenian victory and the formation of the Republic of Artsakh in the region in 1991, the conflict has been described as "frozen" whilst peace talks have been conducted by the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE Minsk) (Council on Foreign Relations, 2020). Despite this conflict has frequently occurred in recent years (Harutyunyan, 2017, p.70, Council on Foreign Relations, 2020, BBC, 2016). Other states have also involved themselves in the conflict, namely Russia supplying Armenian forces and Turkey supporting Azerbaijan by closing their border with Armenia in 1993 (Harutyunyan, 2017, pp. 70-71). This therefore gives a brief outline of the history of the conflict and its current status.

Having done this, Neorealism will now be applied to the conflict in order to support the paper's argument. Neorealism, when explaining the conflict, would assert that Armenia has fought for the independence of the Nagorno-Karabakh region in order to attempt to increase its power through territorial gain. Through doing this its security will be strengthened against Azerbaijan and other hostile neighbours such as Turkey. Neorealists would also look at the distribution of capabilities between the two states, noting Azerbaijan's greater natural resources, particularly natural gas, and would therefore assert that Armenia's involvement in the conflict is an attempt to lessen their economic disadvantage.

This interpretation is flawed however, with it ignoring key historical factors and also presuming that Armenia and Azerbaijan act upon the same desires and interests that developed first world states do. Neorealism, being ahistorical, is unaware of the significance of colonialism in causing the conflict, with the Soviet Union creating the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast within the Azerbaijan Soviet Republic despite it having a majority Armenian population, and is also ignorant of the previous conflict between the two states over the region (Harutyunyan, 2017, p. 70). As a result of this it also ignores the ethnic aspect of the conflict, a key domestic factor. This interpretation demonstrates how Neorealism treats all states as being developed due to it drawing evidence from a "restricted universe", causing it to ignore the intricacies and nuances of Third World states and making it unable to fulfil the criteria set out in section 1 or help achieve conflict amelioration (Ayoob, 1998, p. 42).

Subaltern Realism is far more useful when explaining the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Unlike Neorealism, it is aware of the historical causes and ethnic aspect of the conflict, with the region being the victim of "colonially crafted boundaries... (that) paid little attention to the population's precolonial affinities and shared myths and loyalties."

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(Ayoob, 1998, p. 42). Armenia's involvement in the conflict is therefore explained by its desire to aid the secessionist movement within Nagorno-Karabakh, showing how domestic factors can cause interstate conflict. Furthermore, the theory also notes the involvement of more powerful states, notably Russia and Turkey, and the exacerbating effect they have had through funding the conflict and through Turkey closing their border with Armenia (Harutyunyan, 2017, pp. 70-71). Finally, Subaltern Realism also draws attention to the early stage of state-building of both Armenia and Azerbaijan. Having been confronted with this task upon gaining independence both states have naturally sought to achieve territorial and national integrity in the aftermath of a long colonial history, with this being a leading cause of conflict between the two.

This case study therefore shows how Subaltern Realism is able to provide a far more convincing explanation of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict than Neorealism. The explanation given is keenly aware of both the nature and history of Armenia and Azerbaijan, which are not the highly developed units that Neorealism presumes them to be, with Neorealism also being ignorant of the colonially drawn borders that are a key cause of ethnic conflict here. It is for these reasons also that Subaltern Realism is more suited for prescribing strategies for conflict alleviation. Through this case study it can be seen that Subaltern Realism's understanding of Third World states and the factors that motivates their behaviour in the international system is key in allowing it to provide a deeper, more convincing explanation of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict than Neorealism, showing how the theory is able to fulfil the criteria set out in section 1 whilst supporting the conclusion of sections 1 and 2.

## Conclusion

This paper has aimed to argue that Mohamed Ayoob's Subaltern Realism possesses rehabilitative potential for Realism within IR theory due to it fixing the flaws of Neorealism by being able to explain the behaviour of a majority of states in the international system and the causes of conflict between them. These criteria are key for successful theorising in IR and have therefore been used as a method of testing the credibility of both Neorealism and Subaltern Realism. In order to show how Neorealism fails to satisfy these criteria and show why Realism requires rehabilitation the theory has been critiqued from a post-colonial perspective, showing how the problem of western centrism affects it. Here it can be seen that this causes it to draw evidence from a small minority of developed states, leaving it unable to account for Third World states entering the system as a result of decolonisation. As these states form the vast majority of those in the international system Neorealism is therefore unable to satisfy the test criteria. The theory's central argument, that the bipolar system of the Cold War was stable in nature, is erroneous as a result as it ignores the lack of order amongst less developed states during the period. In addition to this the theory's positivist approach was also criticised due to it preventing Neorealism from expanding its analysis to include states in the Third World.

Subaltern Realism has then been analysed in order to show how it is able to satisfy the criteria for successful IR theorising. Through examining the features of Subaltern Realism it has been shown that the theory incorporates Third World states into a neo-classical realist analytical framework, noting that states in the Third World are at an early stage of state-building and are prone to domestic disorder, with this being a key cause of interstate conflict. Furthermore, the theory is also keenly aware of the history of developing states, giving it strong explanatory potential in relation to interstate conflict. Following this examination both theories have been applied to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, showing how Subaltern Realism provides a more useful and credible analysis of the conflict than Neorealism, showing how the latter theory's western-centric nature hinders its practical viability.

This allows this paper to draw three final conclusions. Firstly, that Neorealism is unsuitable for use as an IR theory and possesses little explanatory ability for a majority of the world. Secondly, that Subaltern Realism is both convincing and credible as an IR theory and that it represents a superior alternative to Neorealism. Thirdly, and most significantly, that Realism requires rehabilitation due to the failings of Neorealism, and that this can be achieved through the application Ayoob's theory of Subaltern Realism.

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# Rehabilitating Realism Through Mohammed Ayoob's "Subaltern Realism" Theory

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